

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball TipOff Media Days

Tuesday, October 15, 2024

Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Oklahoma Sooners Coach Porter Moser

Men's Media Day Press Conference



Q. Porter, obviously the obvious question, moving to the SEC, Oklahoma's first year there, what are the big differences that you've noticed so far between the Big 12 and the SEC, and how have you handled that move to this point?

PORTER MOSER: Well, first of all, I'm so excited to have a home. I've been to three straight media days knowing I was going to be in a different conference and answering questions about the SEC, so it's great to be answering questions at the SEC media day.

The big difference is obviously you're not into the games yet. I've been in a great league, and I must be the good luck charm because I think the Big 12 the last three years have had like nine teams in the top 25 and all of a sudden this is a year where we have nine teams in the top 25 here.

This level, the SEC, there's unbelievable coaches. The talent level is tremendous. Just been watching a lot of games. We've played SEC teams.

The offensive rebounding, the athleticism in transition and the athleticism on the glass is just phenomenal, as you watch in the off-season of just the constant pressure that's put on you in transition on the glass.

But they're elite leagues. The SEC is going to take a backseat to nobody this year, and I think it's going to be the best league in the country this year.

Q. You and Chris Beard, both UALR coaching alums. Now you're in the SEC. Wondering what you think about that, and maybe look back at your time at UALR and how that helped you get to where you are today.

PORTER MOSER: Yeah, so start with the last part of your question. For those of you that don't know, I got my head coaching break at UALR, my first head coaching, at 31.

That was just such a great break. And I loved Little Rock. I had two kids in Little Rock.

A little known fact, I was asked a question, where am I looking forward to playing the most, and I was this close to saying Barnhill, but I didn't, because I don't want to deal with that when we do play there. I ended up choosing Atlantis, the ballroom in Atlantis.

Frank Broyles brought me in at 32 to interview. The only time I've ever been in there was on the interview for the University of Arkansas. I'm thankful I didn't. I probably wouldn't have been ready at 32 to handle that.

Then obviously Chris coached there, and Chris and I have been friends way before we both were head coaches, and we did a clinic at Arkansas two years ago together.

Both of us, those were huge stepping stones in our career. Both of us talked about how much we loved Little Rock and that we are competing again in the SEC is apropos.

I had great fond memories of my head coaching career beginning in Little Rock.

Q. Was that coaching clinic in Hot Springs? Or where was that?

PORTER MOSER: Yeah. It was that Arkansas state coaches' clinic. I'm trying to remember what high school it was now. But we were back-to-back speakers, but then we ended up -- he was trying to get out of there to go recruit some kid I was probably recruiting to get a leg up on me, so I made him stay, and we did a couple parts of the clinic together.

But yeah, he's been a friend for a long time. He's an outstanding coach. But yeah, that was at the state coaches coaching clinic there in Arkansas.

Q. You played Arkansas the last three years in Tulsa, and obviously it's a league game, so it's going to be a home and home, and you faced Muss. You probably didn't think you'd be facing Cal. What do you think about Cal taking that job and him being at Arkansas



instead of Kentucky?

PORTER MOSER: Yeah, we've played Arkansas and Tulsa the last three years, and it was nothing I didn't know. They've got an awesome fan base. I saw those three years in Tulsa.

Yeah, nobody saw it coming with Cal, but once he's there, he's obviously amazing. Amazing coach, amazing person. Unbelievable life for any program. With that fan base, they're doubling down, getting a great coach and a great ambassador for the school.

Q. I think you got to the Jumpman, and you guys were in the top 10, and then you go from that to First Team out. Sam was over there earlier talking about how, even with the new guys that you guys brought in, a bunch of people that have played in the NCAA Tournament or just missed it or won their conference, that it's a hungry group because of that feeling on Selection Sunday. Can you speak about that a little bit?

PORTER MOSER: No, it was. People talk about balance of your roster, and that Sunday was probably -- of my professional career, was one of the worst days to where you're feeling all -- the whole year you're in, and that's why you can't look at that crap. You can't wake up and look at that app on your phone, the bracketology, whatever it is, because every day from like December 1st we were in. And we were 18-6 and lost 1, 4 and 6 leading scorers, and we ended up not getting in on that day.

But my faith tells you a lot about perseverance. What doesn't kill you, doesn't break you, makes you stronger. So we share that day with Sam Godwin and Jalon, who were here, and we talk about that a lot. That was one of the hardest days we went through.

We combined it with I think four or five guys that have played in the tournament. So we got a mix of guys that have played in it, one guy played in the Final Four, a bunch of other guys played in the tournament with guys that had that day. I loved watching that blend of emotions come together. That's what's been part of that.

But yeah, it's rough. There's not a day that goes by that I don't think about that Selection Sunday, and I could get up here and talk about a lot of different things about how that went down and what was right and what went wrong about that day, but that's not going to help me. What's going to help me is putting together this team and moving forward so that day doesn't happen again.

Q. You have nine newcomers coming in this year.

You're new to the league. What can the SEC look forward to in the Oklahoma Sooners basketball?

PORTER MOSER: You know, I think that having this many newcomers, unfortunately, has been the new reality of what's going on. I've been such a coach with development, retention, I'm a big believer in your newcomers come in and they see how the older guys do things. At Loyola I was such a big believer. Retention has been hard with the transfer portal and NIL combined.

The one thing I will say is two of our toughest players that we had on last year's 20-win season was Sam Godwin and Jalon Moore. Those were two starters that had been through a lot. So we added these newcomers. And the one thing that those newcomers -- we got a lot of different blends -- can say every day is two of our hardest practicing guys every single day are Jalon Moore and Sam Godwin. That's the standard of how hard they're going.

I think those two guys really bring in some toughness, some athleticism. I think we brought in some shooting. It doesn't mean anything about the past, but we have somewhere -- our shooting I think is really up based on what we're doing in this off-season, tracking all the numbers. So I definitely -- analytically, I feel like we're going to shoot the ball better and more often.

But the thing that you have to do, just studying this league, is you've got to be better rebounding. It's the best offensive rebounding league in the country, and you've got to be able to rebound and stop that break. So I think that's one of the things we've been focusing in on day in and day out.

Q. Coaching against Mark Pope at BYU in the Big 12, he's also joining you in the SEC. What is Kentucky getting in him as a coach? And he's also bringing Otega Oweh with him, as well. What can Kentucky expect from him, as well?

PORTER MOSER: You know, playing Mark at Kentucky, one, he's such a good coach. He teaches great spacing. Offensively he had such -- the way the ball moved, the way he could do things, and everybody that knows Mark, he's just an unbelievable guy.

The fact that he played at Kentucky, is an ambassador for them, it's been fun to watch as I studied him in his first months on the job. He's put together a great roster. Otega started for me the last two years. He's going to get toughness, a great kid, and really athletic, can go downhill, physical, and plays with an edge. They're going to have a lot of good things from Otega.

Q. When you were at UALR, Arkansas had a policy, they didn't play any in-state schools. That's changed. They're playing UALR and some other, they played UAPB and UCA. I am wondering as a guy who was at UALR, what do you think about the policy changing? And Darrell Walker is there, who won a Sun Belt title and an OVC title. I think these guys got a pretty good team again. Do you follow Darrell at all, and do you keep up with UALR?

PORTER MOSER: Yeah, got to know Darrell working for Sidney Moncrief. He's done great. So I follow it.

To answer your question about the policy of them playing, I can give you the coach-speak answer. That's hypocritical. Or I can give you the real answer. Because I've been on both ends of that. I've been at Little Rock wanting to play Arkansas. I've been at Loyola wanting to play Illinois. And I've been at Oklahoma not wanting to play Oral Roberts.

So I've been all over the map. So that's the real answer, is that when you're that underdog, yeah, that policy. When you're that one, you want freedom of scheduling, knowing certain games can hurt you.

I think nowadays more than ever with the NET and all that, you've really got to factor in what can hurt you more than can help you. I think that's got to be the answer.

Before it wasn't as big of a thing about it, but nowadays you've just got to ask yourself, what's the most strategic thing that could hurt you or help you. If you lose a Quad 3 or 4 home game or did you play a Quad 4 neutral game. You've just got to ask yourself that question, is it worth the risk and reward.

I'm at Loyola and Little Rock, hell, yeah, it's worth the risk. I'm at Oklahoma, it's not.

Q. Interviewing with Frank Broyles, pretty strong personality. I was wondering what you remember about interviewing with him and what that experience was like.

PORTER MOSER: What I remember about Frank Broyles, one, super smart. Bigger-than-life personality. Picked me up himself from the airport. Worst driver I ever drove with. Unbelievable. Really smart guy. Loved talking sports with him. Really great conversationalist. But all those positives and then driving from the airport to the thing, I felt I needed two seatbelts.

Q. I wanted to ask you about one of your transfers. We got to see him a little bit at Alabama last year. What is Mohamed Wague going to bring to your

roster?

PORTER MOSER: So Mo came in and he had a broken foot. He gutted it out playing the second half of the season there with that stress fracture. They took care of it, had the surgery, went in the portal, and I just liked that he played for Nate and he played for Bob Huggins. He had tasted winning. We needed another big. I thought he defended, rebound, ran the court.

He had experience -- so I thought there was so many positives, who he played for, his journey. But you had to weigh in the injury. He's been great. He's been cleared healthy for about a month. He's looking as good as running the court, rebounding.

He's got that apprehension that you have coming back from a surgery like that on a foot past him now. The first couple weeks he was apprehensive. Now you can just see his experience of running the court, defensively communicating. We're expecting big things from him, and I'm really counting on him a lot this year, especially having gone through the SEC wars that he's gone through.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

